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BOOKS OF MEDIEVAL AND MODERN EUROPEAN HISTORY

A History of Modern Liberty. By JAMES MACKINNON, Ph.D. Volumes I. and II. (London, New York, and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Company. 1906. Pp. xxii, 398; xi, 490.)

THOSE who feared that history was in our day passing into an age of specialism, whose products, instead of literature, would be only the scientific results of microscopic research, must long since have begun to smile at their fears. Historical science would seem just now rather to have cause for alarm lest all the time of her best trained workers be devoted to the popularization of her results. And this new work of Dr. Mackinnon, whose first two volumes—"The Middle Ages", "The Age of the Reformation"—lie now before us? Are they popularization or research or perhaps a broader and bolder synthesis?

Their novel title might promise almost anything. Yet, on second thought, is the subject so new as it seems? Lord Acton, too, dreamed of a history of liberty. Could his thought have suggested Mr. Mackinnon's? But no: Mr. Mackinnon tells us that these two volumes of his work were complete before he so much as learned of Lord Acton's dream, and of those two Bridgnorth lectures which were at least a hint at the dream's fulfilment he has clearly never learned at all. Lord Acton's, too, would have been a history of liberty from the beginning—the longer of his two lectures is devoted to antiquity: Mr. Mackinnon begins with the Middle Ages. Yet its scope is much broader, on the other hand, than that of the eloquent Frenchman, Albrepsy, who thirty years ago wrote his *Comment les Peuples deviennent Libres* to demonstrate the identity of liberty with Protestantism; and, as for Dr. Scherger's recent book on *The Evolution of Modern Liberty*, that is only a study of the development of political theory. Dr. Mackinnon's is that, too, but only incidentally: his theme is all liberty—political, social, intellectual, religious—and his is, above all, a history of events. Yet, as one turns its pages, one still has doubts. "The Emancipation of the Italian Communes", "The Third Estate and the States-General", "Religious and Social Revolt in Bohemia", "Communeros and Cortes", "Constitutional and Social Progress in Mediaeval England", "The Renascence and the Emancipation of the Intellect", "The Conflict for Religious Liberty in France", "Reformation and Revolution in Scotland"—thrilling topics these, but surely not unfamiliar. This liberty of his, is it any other than that which all liberty-loving historians have made implicitly their theme? He understands it, he says, to be "the free development of man, subject . . . to the limits . . . inseparable from human life" (p. vii), and it is the object of his book to trace its realization by man as a citizen. What, then, have our universal histories, our histories of civilization, been about? Can any treatment less broad than theirs be adequate to the infinite complexity of such a theme?

Yet let us not do Mr. Mackinnon injustice. Vast though his subject

is, it is something frankly to have recognized liberty as a goal and resolutely to have kept one's eye upon it; it is much to have discerned the unity which lies behind her varying faces, even though, like Mr. Mackinnon, one is content to assume it without discussion. What really interests him, indeed, though his book shows everywhere the influence of recent research as to the growth of political theory, and though he devotes in each volume a chapter expressly to the discussion of this growth, is much less the rise of the conception of liberty than the struggles, however blind, for its achievement. It is to these stirring episodes that his narrative is chiefly devoted, and with a glow of sympathy that lends both cogency and fire to his style. Of fresh research or original speculation there is, for the most part, little enough. Though he has dipped often and fruitfully into the contemporary sources, it has been for color rather than for light. The books to which he is most indebted—they, too, are conscientiously listed at the end of his chapters—are the manuals and monographs familiar to all scholars. From them he has here drawn for us what he doubtless meant to draw—a brilliant and inspiring series of lectures. If this seem less than the promise of his title, it is but fair to note that the first of the present volumes professes to be only an introduction, and that the second grows in learning as it progresses.

Where so much has been done, and well done, it is ungracious to point out defects. In the field of political history Mr. Mackinnon's reading, if by no means exhaustive, has been wisely chosen, and his instinct for facts is singularly sound; it is only his bibliographies which, here as in his earlier books, betray a carelessness strange for an academic writer. If his love for the dramatic leads him still to cling to legends like those of Tell and Winkelried, it is not often from ignorance of what is urged against them. But when he turns to the history of social, of intellectual, of religious liberty, his information is less ample. Even in his chapters on the Reformation, where his vigor is at its best, his reading is often sadly in arrears. How can a modern scholar write of the tolerance of the German reformers without knowing the studies of Nikolaus Paulus? How of Calvin and his opponents without knowing Buisson's *Castellion*? Yet even here Mr. Mackinnon's intuitions serve him well. Taken all in all, his book is both readable and instructive. It may safely be commended to all whose enthusiasm for liberty needs a stimulant.

A Short History of Italy (476-1900). By HENRY DWIGHT SEDGWICK. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company. 1905. Pp. x, 443.)

THIS is one of those books the object of which is to tabulate results under strict avoidance of discussion. If we would be fair to the author, we must recognize that under the necessities inherent in the nature of his task he would have to strive for swiftness, brevity, breadth, and in-